

HER CANINE CHAUFFEUR

By Bennet Musson

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It was a dull day for bulldogs. Puffs, whose bull baiting ancestors had bequeathed him a love of adventure, sat on the veranda of the villa and yawned.

A green automobile rolled along the driveway of the house. When it stopped at the veranda, a pretty, brown haired girl of twenty laughingly greeted her enthusiastic friend, who leaped upon her, regardless of the damage which dirty paws inflicted on a white serge dress.

"One would think I had been away a year instead of a week," the girl said gayly.

"Is it only a week since I first met you?" replied her companion. "I seem to have known you always."

Florence Hastings' face became serious as she patted the wriggling Puffs. "I am afraid your imagination is over-powerful, Mr. Oakley," she said. "Any-way, you've saved me a dismal railway journey from the Newtons'. I was glad to let my trunk take it alone. So, whatever your condition of mind, you must come in and meet papa."

"Is he at home?"

"He comes on the 5 o'clock 'relief express.' That's what he calls any train which takes him away from Wall street."

"He leaves his office at 4?"

"Yes. Do you hesitate at the order of passing the interval with me?" Florence was smiling again.

Porter Oakley laughed protestingly. "I was hesitating because of an important business affair," he said finally. "Is there a telegraph office in the village?"

"There is, and I will send a groom with your message."

Oakley looked at his watch. "Quarter of 3," he murmured. "Will you pardon me if I go to the office in the automobile?" he asked. "It will save fifteen valuable minutes."

As the machine puffed along the driveway Florence watched it musingly and inwardly resented her feeling of relief—it seemed like weakness.

When she first met Oakley at the Newtons' country house, she vaguely disliked him. As she watched the automobile speeding toward the village she thought of Trilby and smiled.

Then she grew serious and felt sorry that she had asked Oakley to stay, but she knew that if the little scene near the veranda were to be repeated she would ask him again.

"Do you believe in hypnotic influence, Puffs?" she said softly, putting an arm around the bulldog's muscular back.

Puffs did not. Every line in his sturdy figure expressed disbelief. Then he conveyed sympathy and encouragement by extending a few inches of damp pink tongue toward his mistress' cheek.

That evening Florence sat on the veranda with Porter Oakley. Her father did not arrive on the "relief express," nor had word come from him. Oakley had waited for the older man, had accepted an invitation to dine, and now he sat with Florence and watched the moon creep toward the Orange mountains.

"There is still an hour or so of moonlight, and I shall have a bright road to New York," he said.

"I thought father would surely be here on the 8 o'clock train," said Florence.

Oakley held the face of his watch to his cigar tip. "Half past 8 now," he answered. "When does the next train arrive?"

"At 9."

"Your father may be on that. Why don't you run down to the station with me and meet him?" Oakley said.

Florence looked up at him quickly. "Why, I—I—," she began, but Oakley was leaning toward her, the moonlight shining on his face and lighting his gray eyes, which were fixed on hers.

Five minutes later the automobile was running along the country road, containing one uneasy and one triumphant person and followed by a white, four legged creature whose under jaw protruded at the angle of determination and who patiently blinked away the dust aroused by the flying monster in front.

The hands of the little red faced clock in the tower of the station pointed to a quarter of the hour, and they passed on, Oakley saying that they would have five minutes of speeding before returning to wait for the train.

The lights of the village disappeared, and the moon was hidden by the overhanging trees of the road along which they flew. Puffs stretched his legs and galloped his hardest. The machine drew rapidly away from him, but he followed, with the perseverance of his kind.

"We had better turn back," said Florence as they reached an open stretch of road.

Oakley consulted his watch. "After 9," he said, in apparent surprise. "We can't meet your father now. Shan't we keep on?"

"I prefer to go home," Florence replied coldly.

Oakley leaned over the steering lever as the machine sped on its way. Then he turned and his eyes met Florence's.

"I am the chauffeur," he said quietly.

Florence looked steadily at him. Porter Oakley returned her gaze, but the trifling power that had made her forget conventionalities was dissipated by the honest wrath which glowed in the girl's eyes.

"Mr. Oakley, will you stop back?" she said sharply.

"Miss Hastings, we are not going back," Oakley replied mockingly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have known and wanted you for a week. It usually takes less than a week for me to get anything I want. You will go home, but it will be tomorrow—and it will be as Mrs. Oakley."

Florence rose from her seat. "If you do not stop, I shall jump out," she said.

Oakley seized her arm, but she struggled. His grasp on the steering lever became unsteady, the machine swerved violently, and he gradually brought it to a standstill at the side of the road.

Florence jumped to the ground and started toward home, but Oakley placed himself in her way.

"You shall not go back," he said. "If you won't go on, we can stay in this lonely place, and in the morning, when it is known that you have passed the night with me, you may be more willing to accept my proposals."

Florence stopped and faced Oakley. Her hands were clinched, but she was trembling pitifully. He smiled and came toward her.

"Come, now. Marriage is easy in New Jersey," he said. "We can go—"

A white, panting form shot from the road and came between them. Florence threw herself on the ground, clasped her arms around a muscular neck and sobbed: "Thank God, you have come, Puffs! Thank God, you have come!"

Oakley drew back. He was not smiling. "You don't think I shall let a dog interfere with my plans, do you?" he asked.

He stepped to the automobile, placed his hand under the seat, and when he withdrew it he held a glittering object. Florence gave a low cry, and a white streak flew from the road. The next instant Oakley was kneeling on the ground, Puffs' teeth were firmly holding his wrist, and the useless weapon was lying in the dust.

Florence looked at him helplessly; then her eyes brightened. "Come, Puffs, we shall go home," she said, "and he will take us."

Half an hour later a green automobile drew slowly up the driveway of the Hastings country house. Seated in it were a young woman and a sullen looking man. Between them, with his back to the girl and his eyes fixed on the man, was a stolid and dusty bulldog.

When Mr. Hastings arrived on the 11 o'clock train, he found his daughter in a subdued mood.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, waving a telegram before her.

Florence took the paper and read: "Meet me at the uptown ferry, 10 o'clock tonight."

"This is why you stayed in the city," she said slowly. Then, as she realized the meaning of the message, "It must have been Mr. Oakley's important business."

When Mr. Hastings had recovered a degree of equanimity after the story of the automobile, he looked fondly at Puffs.

"I'll buy one of those machines some day," he said, gravely extending his hand, into which a responsive paw was placed, "and when I do I shan't have to look far for a chauffeur."

Very Old Church.

The Church of San Miguel, at Santa Fe, is claimed by New Mexicans to be the oldest in the United States. There is much dispute over the exact date of its erection, but it was certainly built between 200 and 300 years ago by the first Indian converts under the direction of the Spanish padres—some say as long ago as 1545. Inside it is like a vault, black and crumbling, with cracked adobe walls and roof, and a gallery whose woodwork still shows traces of the figures painted there by the Indians, designs like those they put upon their pottery today.

But the most interesting thing in San Miguel is the old bell, St. Joseph. Black with age, it looks like a mass of old iron in its dim recesses. But strike it, and it gives forth a mellow note of silvery clearness, echoing with marvelous sweetness through the vaultlike old church. The quality of the bell metal makes the richness of the note, and there is a tradition that it was made of the gold and silver ornaments of the Spanish as a thank offering for a victory over the Moors.

At any rate, the old Spanish padres brought the bell, already ancient, across the seas from Spain and over mountains and plateaus from Mexico. The Moors are gone, Spain's great empire of the west has vanished, and still the old bell stands there, older than American civilization.

The Fan in History.

As in a mirror, the fan, the origin of which is lost in the twilight of oriental legend, reflects the habits, customs, art and taste of every country which has made a friend of an article so useful and ornamental. Greece was the first European country to adopt the fan—two birds' wings—one of its uses being by acolytes in the temples to drive away the flies from the sacrifice. It served the early Christians in the catacombs a similar purpose when the bread and wine were spread for the sacrament, a custom which lasted in the Roman Catholic church to the fourteenth century.

In this same century the fan made an almost simultaneous appearance throughout Italy and France, in England and Spain. Its most artistic flights have been achieved in France, but not even to France will Spain yield in its use of the fan as "an important weapon in the mimic warfare of coquetry and flirtation." Whether the Spanish lady is in church or a place of amusement, whether visiting or walking, it is always in her hands, frequently portraying the horrors of the bullfight. Corresponding with these, certain French revolution fans represent Charlotte Corday carrying a dagger in one hand and a fan in the other.

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The idea seems to be pretty general that ambition is born in us, that we have little or nothing to do with its acquisition or cultivation and that we cannot modify, enlarge, stimulate or improve it to any great extent. A study of life does not confirm this idea. That the ambition is a cultivable quality, capable of being molded or destroyed according as we will, is demonstrated every day in the lives of those about us. We see people in whom the spark of ambition is kindled suddenly by the reading of a book, the hearing of a lecture or the speaking of a kindly word by a friend or teacher, and, on the other hand, we see those who allow their ambition slowly to die out for want of fuel.

The death of ambition is one of the tragedies of life. When a young man feels his ambition begin to fade there is trouble somewhere. Either he is in the wrong environment and his faculties protest against what he is trying to do, or his health is poor, or he is being led into dissipation by bad companions. A youth whose ambition begins to wane is not in a normal condition. When he is not stimulated by a noble purpose and filled with a desire to become a strong man among men there is something wrong somewhere.—Success.

VICTOR HUGO.

Everything About Him Was Extraordinary, Even His Digestion.

Never to be forgotten were those evenings when we were lucky enough to find neither minister, senator nor deputy—for in the presence of political men Victor Hugo always seemed to me somewhat stiff—when he warmed to his subject, let himself go, as it were, and his conversation took a natural turn full of charm.

How he would then have astonished those who had represented him as being exceedingly solemn—in fact, a poseur! If they had seen him so it was doubtless due to themselves. Perhaps to the bumpous and self opinionated he gave himself the air of an oracle, but with poets, I repeat, he was ease and simplicity—I might even say familiarity—himself.

At these dinners we could not help admiring his formidable appetite. He ate enormous pieces of roast meat and drank large glasses of undiluted wine. A typical detail struck me particularly. At the end of his meal he dipped orange quarters into his wine and ate them with marked satisfaction. Everything about Victor Hugo was extraordinary, even his digestion.—Francis Coppee in Critic.

EPAULETS.

Originally Intended as a Protection From Sword Cuts.

It is probable that the epaulet was originally intended as a protection to the shoulder from sword cuts rather than as an ornament. Ever since 1795 they have been worn by commissioned officers of the British navy. According to the officer's rank they vary in design. A sub-lieutenant wears only one composed of gold lace; other ranks two. The degree of rank is shown by crowns, anchors and stars worked in silver upon the epaulets and also by the thickness of the cord of which they are composed. Previous to the Crimean war epaulets were worn by both officers and men of the army. Here, as in the navy, distinction was shown both in their texture and design. Those of the officer were made of gold braid, while with the rank and file they were merely of worsted.—London Telegraph.

The King of Molnaks.

The king of molnaks lives in the Indian and south Pacific oceans. He attains to a weight of 500 pounds, and the shell is of the bivalve kind, and the shape is about the same as that of our common fresh water mussel. The gigantic tridacna is the largest molnaks known to have lived on the earth since the sturion age. It is found on the bottom of the shallow parts of the ocean, and the large individuals have no longer the power to move about. They lie on one side, and all about them the corals build up until King Tridacna is sometimes found in a well-like hole in the coral formation.—St. Nicholas.

The Ruby.

Rubies are most suited for young lovers. They are also most expensive. The people of the Burmese empire believe that a ruby is a human soul just about to enter the sacred precincts of Buddha and consequently in the last stages of transmigration. A ruby is an emblem of the most passionate and absorbing love. A ruby in the old days of chivalry was supposed to lead a knight to conquest, to cause obstacles to melt away and to inspire one with bravery and seal. It also kept his honor unstained and his character without a blemish.

The Three Horses Won.

A well-known racing man recently lost \$100 to a comparative stranger, who offered to bet him that he could produce three horses which could go ninety miles in three hours. The loser of the wager easily accomplished the feat by starting all three horses at once, by which artifice thirty miles only was the distance they had to traverse in the time specified.—London Standard.

Accommodating.

Doctor—Has your cough troubled you as much as usual today, Mrs. Grand? Patient—Oh, no, not nearly as much! I got Horstmann, my maid, to cough for me. She is a very accommodating young woman.—Boston Transcript.

A man of business may talk of philosophy; a man who has none may practice it.—Pope.

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